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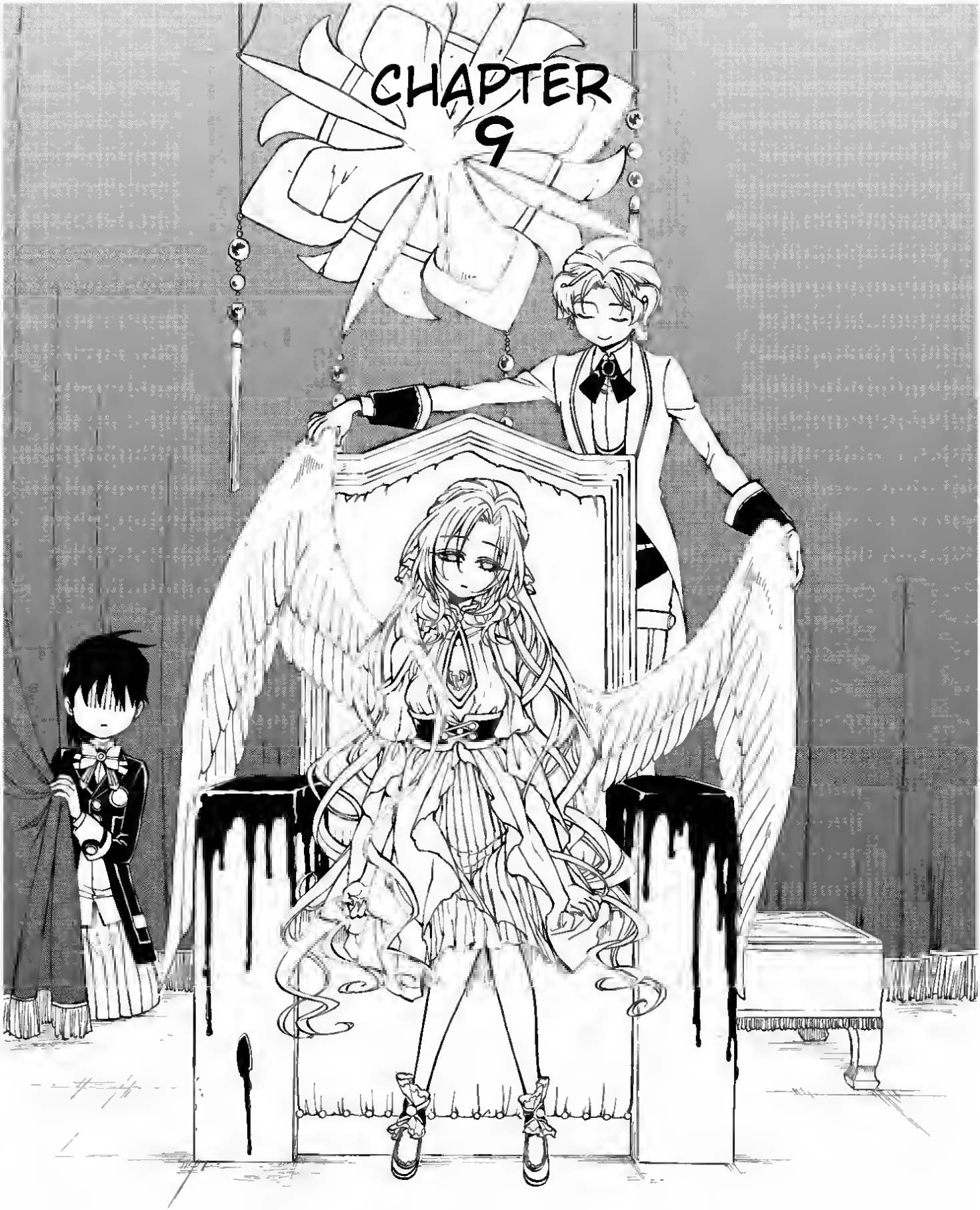
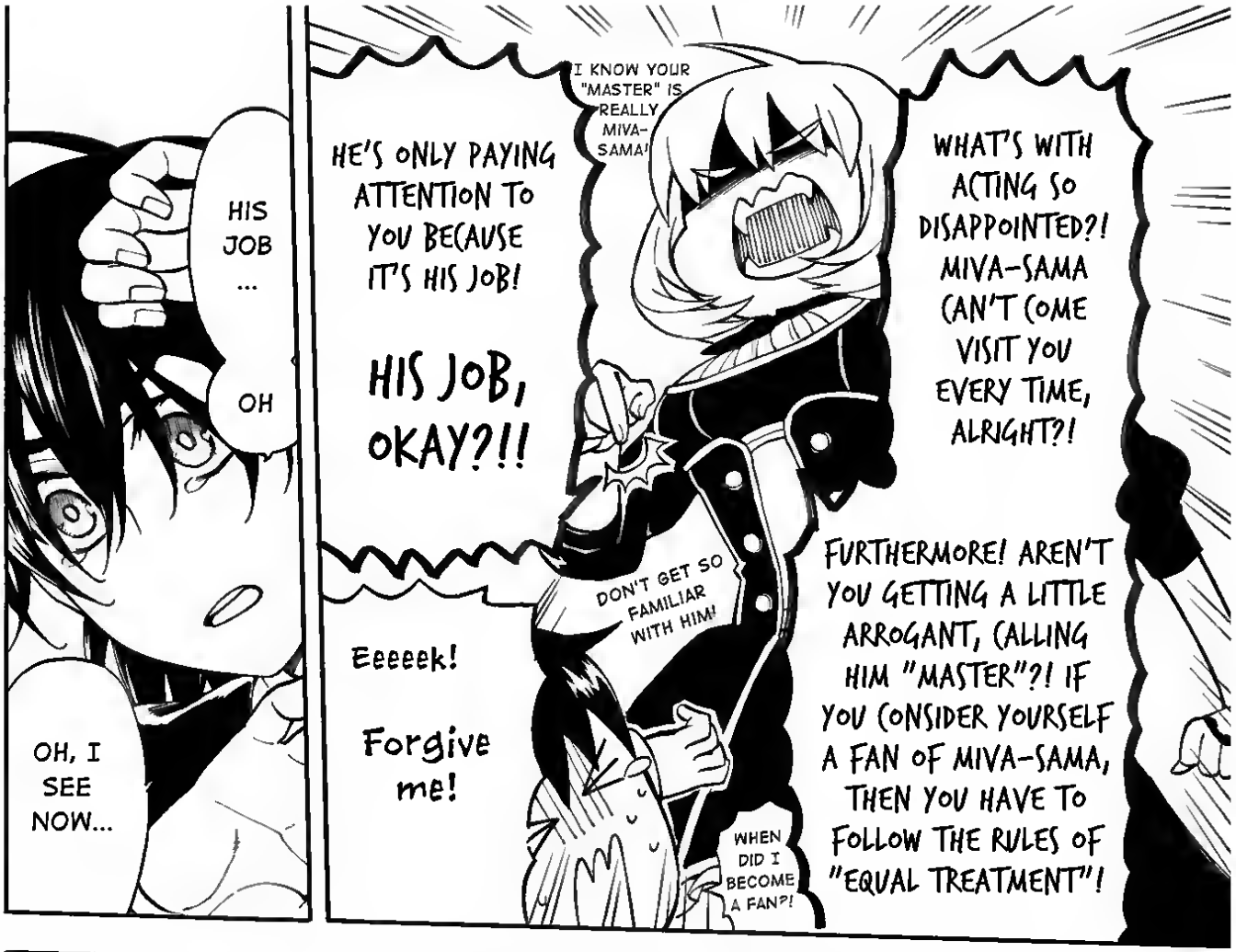

CHAPTER
9

ROYAL PALACE MAGIC ADEPTS WING
WHAT?!
PULLED ALL-NIGHTER
HARUKA FLED THE CASTLE?!
ALSO, ONLY A FEW PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT THIS, BUT THERE IS A RUMOR SPREADING THAT HARUKA IS A "FAKE HOLY MAIDEN"
IM-
BUT MANY PEOPLE WITNESSED HER ESCAPING WITH ROSWALD THROUGH THE CASTLE GATE
WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT REALLY HAPPENED YET

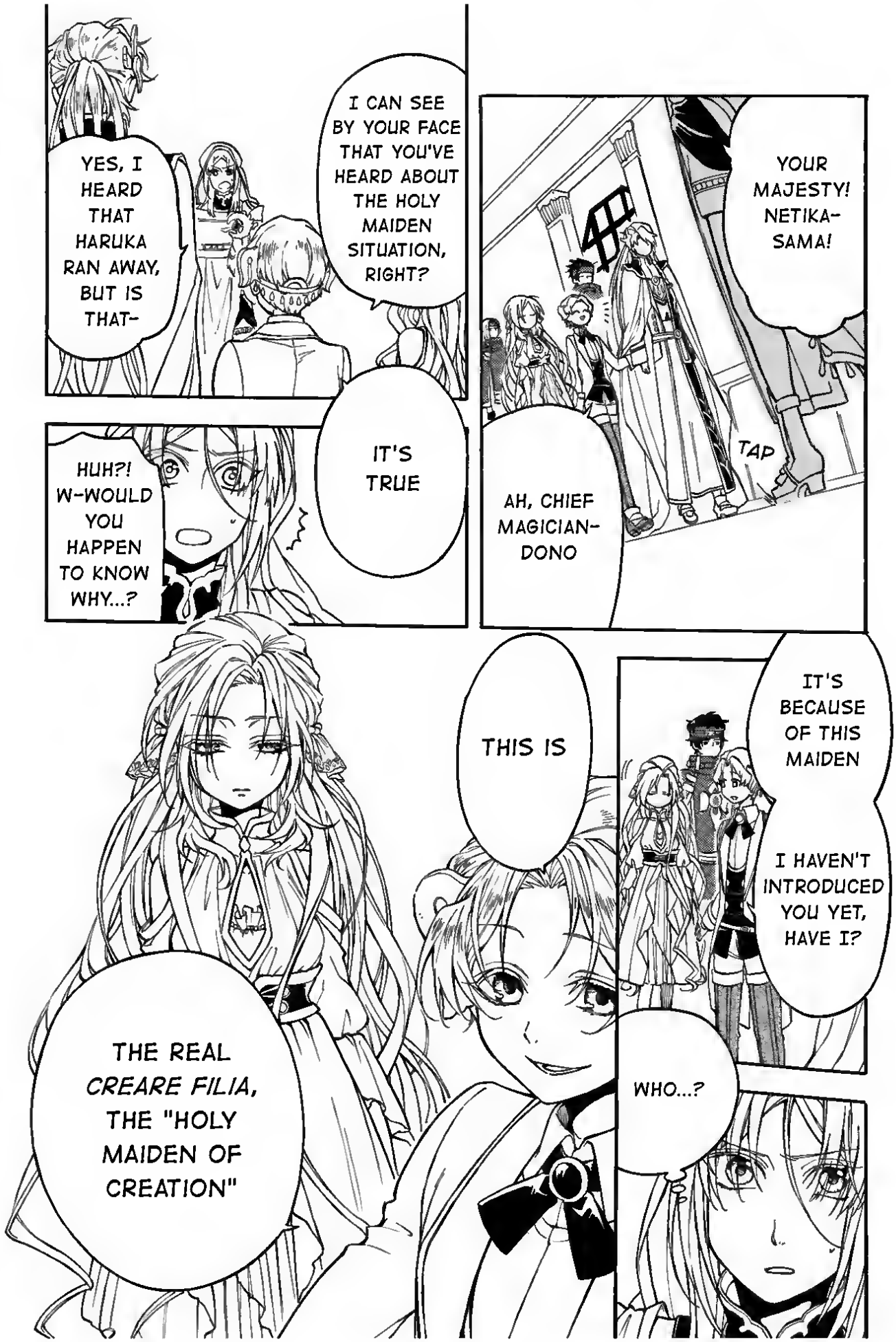
LEARY, THIS MORNING I ASKED YOU TO CHECK ON SATOKI, RIGHT? HOW WAS SHE?
OH, YES. IF I RECALL...
Masterrr!
Terrible news!
DID THAT SATOKI DO SOMETHING DUMB AGAIN?
IM-POSSIBLE! WHY WOULD THEY LET THAT HAPPEN?
KNOCK, KNOCK
BANG
MASTER !!!
OH, IT'S JUST YOU, LEARY-SAN
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
HOLD IT, YOU!
THANKS FOR THE FRESH BREAD!
IT'S HOT!
HERE
WRONG!

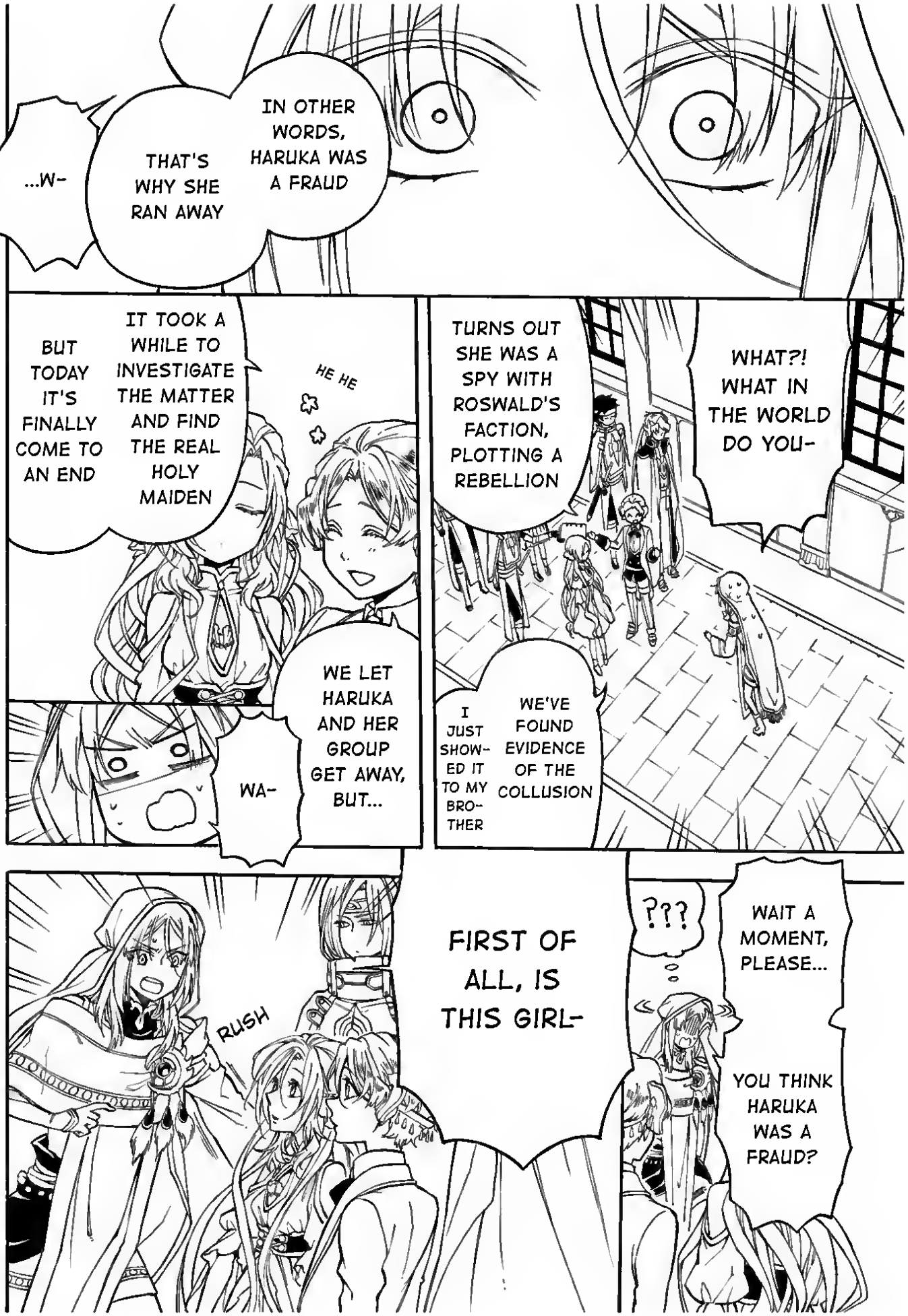

HIS JOB ...
OH
OH, I SEE NOW...
HE'S ONLY PAYING ATTENTION TO YOU BECAUSE IT'S HIS JOB!
HIS JOB, OKAY?!!
I KNOW YOUR "MASTER" IS REALLY MIVA-SAMA!
WHAT'S WITH ACTING SO DISAPPOINTED?! MIVA-SAMA CAN'T COME VISIT YOU EVERY TIME, ALRIGHT?!
DON'T GET SO FAMILIAR WITH HIM!
Eeeeek!
Forgive me!
WHEN DID I BECOME A FAN?!
FURTHERMORE! AREN'T YOU GETTING A LITTLE ARROGANT, CALLING HIM "MASTER"?! IF YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A FAN OF MIVA-SAMA, THEN YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW THE RULES OF "EQUAL TREATMENT"!

ANYWAY, I HAVE A MESSAGE. "THERE ARE NO SUSPICIOUS MOVEMENTS FROM 'THE HORNS', SO CONTINUE ON STANDBY FOR NOW. ALSO, IF YOU HAVE A 'BLUNDER REPORT', I'LL COME HEAR IT," HE SAID.
?
He called it a "Blunder Report"...
He has no confidence in me...
NOW THAT HE KNOWS I'M NOT *THE ONE*
HE NO LONGER HAS ANY REASON TO COME HERE
I SEE...

I HAVE ARRIVED TO ESCORT YOU
SATOKI-SAMA
... LEARY-SA-
AH, WELL, UM... ABOUT THE BLUNDER ...
IT'S JUST A HUNCH, BUT I'LL BET IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE EVENTS YOU SPOKE OF
BUT I'M MORE CONCERNED THAT SHE WAS SO AFRAID OF THE TEMPLE GUARD
LET'S GO FIND SATOKI!
SNAP
AND THAT'S HOW IT WENT
ACTUALLY, SHE DID SEEM A BIT STRANGE...
WHOOSH
CLINK
NOTHING SPECIFIC ...
SO I JUST LEFT IT ALONE ...
SINCE SHE RUSHED OUT TO GREET YOU, SOMETHING WAS DEFINITELY UP...

FIRST WE'LL TRY THE TEMPLE...
HMM? THAT'S...
TAP TAP TAP
HIS MAJESTY DOESN'T LOOK WELL...
HIS MAJESTY ...AND THE SECOND PRINCE
AND THEY'RE ESCORTED BY THE ROYAL GUARD, WHO ONLY ANSWER TO THE ROYAL FAMILY...
IT'S RARE TO SEE THEM ALL IN FORMATION
LEARY, FALL BACK
JUST IN CASE, I WANT TO KEEP OUR CONNECTION HIDDEN
YES, SIR


YES, I HEARD THAT HARUKA RAN AWAY, BUT IS THAT-
I CAN SEE BY YOUR FACE THAT YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT THE HOLY MAIDEN SITUATION, RIGHT?
IT'S TRUE
HUH?! W-WOULD YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHY...?
YOUR MAJESTY! NETIKA-SAMA!
TAP
AH, CHIEF MAGICIAN-DONO
IT'S BECAUSE OF THIS MAIDEN
I HAVEN'T INTRODUCED YOU YET, HAVE I?
WHO...?
THIS IS
THE REAL *CREARE FILIA*, THE "HOLY MAIDEN OF CREATION"


...W-
THAT'S WHY SHE RAN AWAY
IN OTHER WORDS, HARUKA WAS A FRAUD
BUT TODAY IT'S FINALLY COME TO AN END
IT TOOK A WHILE TO INVESTIGATE THE MATTER AND FIND THE REAL HOLY MAIDEN
HE HE
WA-
WE LET HARUKA AND HER GROUP GET AWAY, BUT...
TURNS OUT SHE WAS A SPY WITH ROSWALD'S FACTION, PLOTTING A REBELLION
WHAT?! WHAT IN THE WORLD DO YOU-
I JUST SHOW-ED IT TO MY BRO-THER
WE'VE FOUND EVIDENCE OF THE COLLUSION
RUSH
FIRST OF ALL, IS THIS GIRL-
???
WAIT A MOMENT, PLEASE...
YOU THINK HARUKA WAS A FRAUD?

ASHEEDO
HALT
TINK
CRACK
YOU MUSTN'T KILL HIM
SWISH
MY SINCERE APOLOGIES, CHIEF MAGICIAN-DONO
THEY'RE OUR WATCH-DOGS
THEY ONLY KNOW THAT HARUKA WAS A SPY,
SO THEY CAN'T HELP BUT CONSIDER ALL WHO KNEW HER TOO DANGEROUS TO APPROACH THE TRUE HOLY MAIDEN
WHAT...
MY MAGIC BARRI-ER...
THEY'VE BEEN ORDERED TO KEEP EVERYONE AT A DISTANCE
...
WHAT'S GOING ON...?!

SO FOR THOSE REASONS, WE'RE REMOVING YOU FROM THE MAIDEN EDUCATION TEAM
WHY IS HIS MAJESTY KEEPING SILENT?!
AS FOR THE DETAILS, I'LL WRITE YOU A LETTER ABOUT IT LATER
WE'LL BE THE ONES TO SUPPORT THE HOLY MAIDEN FROM NOW ON
BUT DON'T WORRY, WE'RE NOT DISMISSING YOU AS CHIEF MAGICIAN, OKAY?
IT'S JUST A PREVENT-ATIVE MEASURE
SATOKI...!
SO YOU REALLY WERE INVOLVED!
!
.....

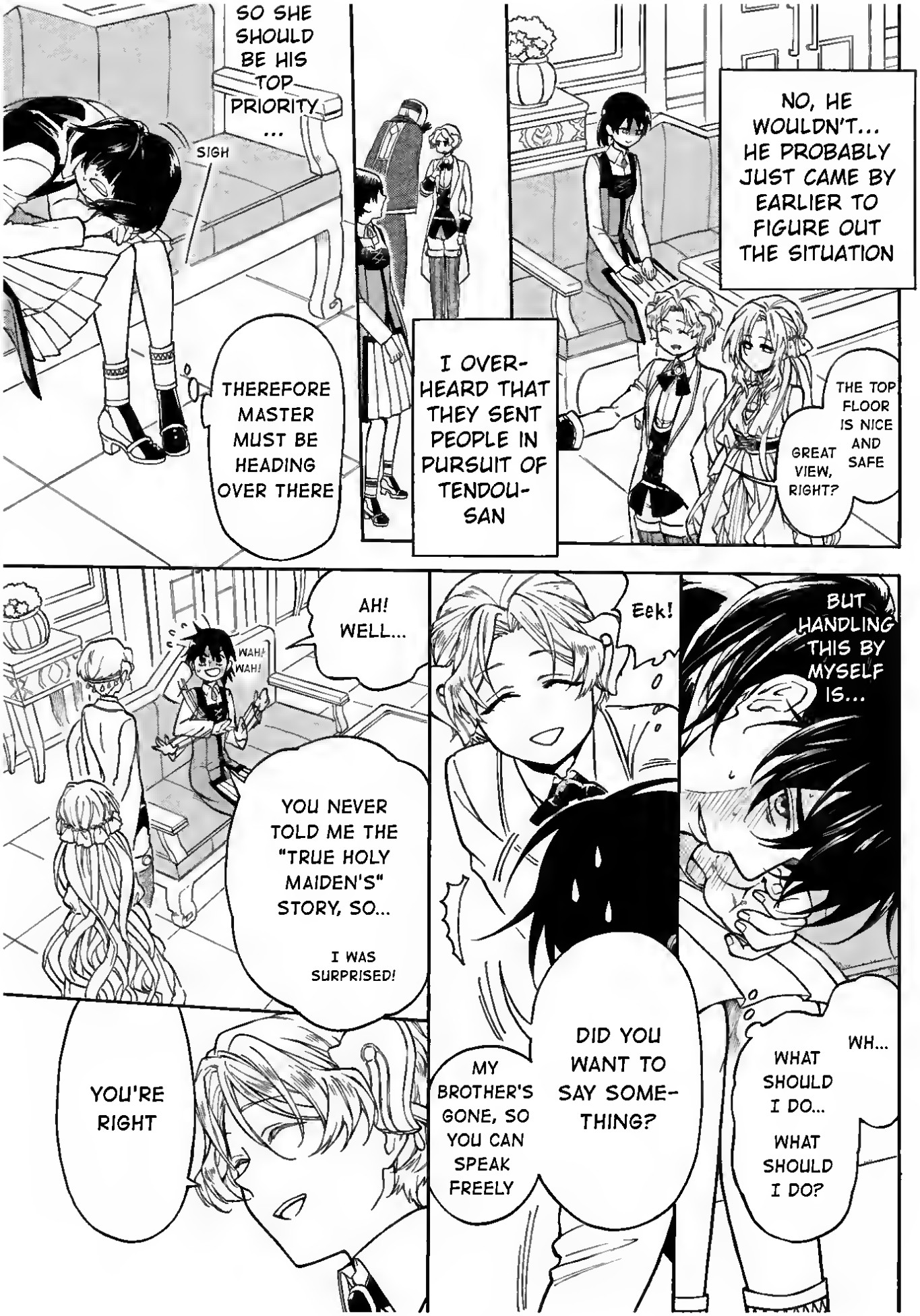
IF YOU SPEAK SOFTLY, IT'LL BE CARRIED BY THE MAGIC
I SAID SOFTLY!
EEK! WHAT?! IT'S TICKLING MY EAR-DRUMS!
TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED!
YOU CAN HEAR ME, RIGHT!? I'M ONLY SPEAKING TO YOU!
!?
I'LL SPEAK TO HER WITH MAGIC!
HEY!
O-OH, SO THAT'S HOW IT WORKS...
KEEP LOOKING FORWARD WHILE YOU TALK!
ALRIGHT THEN, U-UM...
I-
SATOKI-SAN
B-BUT WON'T THEY SENSE IT?
I'M THE TOP BLACK MAGIC SPECIALIST, YOU KNOW. THERE'S NO MAGIC, WEAKER OR STRONGER, THAT CAN DETECT ME!
ENOUGH OF THAT, TALK!

WE'RE IN A HURRY, SO PLEASE DON'T GET DISTRACTED
Shudder
HE NOTICED ?!
MIVA-SAMA, IF I MAY...
...WHAT IS IT?
THEY'RE GONE, RIGHT?

IT'S ABOUT THE TEMPLE GUARD THAT CAME TO SATOKI'S HOME THIS MORNING...
OH, THE ONE THAT SATOKI WAS AFRAID OF?
IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S ACTUALLY A ROYAL GUARD
I SAW HIM BEHIND SATOKI JUST NOW
SO HE WAS IN DISGUISE?
IN OTHER WORDS, THE ROYAL FAMILY SECRETLY SUMMONED SATOKI THIS MORNING?
AND RIGHT AFTER THAT, HARUKA WAS DECLARED A FRAUD
AND THAT GIRL WHO THEY'RE CALLING THE "TRUE HOLY MAIDEN" APPEARED...
...LEARY, HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF NETIKA-SAMA USING MAGIC?
?
NO...? I BELIEVE HE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH SKILL IN IT
I SEE...
HMM
AT LEAST I'VE FIGURED OUT WHO THE MASTERMIND IS...
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?

...OK
LET ME SEE...
SWISH
FIRST, WE FIND HARUKA!
YES, SIR

...WILL MASTER COME FOR ME?
HOLY MAIDEN, THIS IS YOUR NEW ROOM
IT'S IN THE ROYAL FAMILY'S PERSONAL BUILDING


SO SHE SHOULD BE HIS TOP PRIORITY ...
SIGH
THEREFORE MASTER MUST BE HEADING OVER THERE
I OVER-HEARD THAT THEY SENT PEOPLE IN PURSUIT OF TENDOU-SAN
NO, HE WOULDN'T... HE PROBABLY JUST CAME BY EARLIER TO FIGURE OUT THE SITUATION
THE TOP FLOOR IS NICE AND SAFE
GREAT VIEW, RIGHT?
AH! WELL...
WAH! WAH!
YOU NEVER TOLD ME THE "TRUE HOLY MAIDEN'S" STORY, SO...
I WAS SURPRISED!
YOU'RE RIGHT
Eek!
MY BROTHER'S GONE, SO YOU CAN SPEAK FREELY
DID YOU WANT TO SAY SOME-THING?
BUT HANDLING THIS BY MYSELF IS...
WH...
WHAT SHOULD I DO...
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

ALL I SAID WAS...
"WILL YOU COOPERATE WITH ME?"
A CROWD...
!? !?
TREM-BLE
"TO MAKE SURE THE CORRECT PERSON RECEIVES THE GIFT...?"

EEK
SCRAPE
RUSTLE
"UNDERSTAND?"
"THE RULER OF THIS COUNTRY
IS MY BROTHER ALONE."
I DON'T LIKE IT, BUT I GET THE MESSAGE
IF I DON'T DO AS THEY SAY, I'LL BE KILLED...

I'M STILL GETTING SHIVERS!
I DID ALL THAT REALLY WELL, JUST LIKE YOU ASKED!
BUT THIS IS GOING TOO FAR! IT'S WRONG!
BE-CAUSE THAT GIRL IS-
YES
"TRAINED" ...
I'VE READ THE CHIEF MAGICIAN'S REPORTS, I'M AWARE OF THE FACT THAT HARUKA IS THE REAL ONE
"THAT GIRL" IS A FAKE
SHE WAS PART OF A SHIPMENT OF SLAVES FROM A FARAWAY COUNTRY THAT HAS NO MAGIC POWER, AND WAS TRAINED FOR OUR PURPOSES
NOT BAD, RIGHT?
AND I KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HER POWER AND YOURS
HOWEVER
THEN WHY-

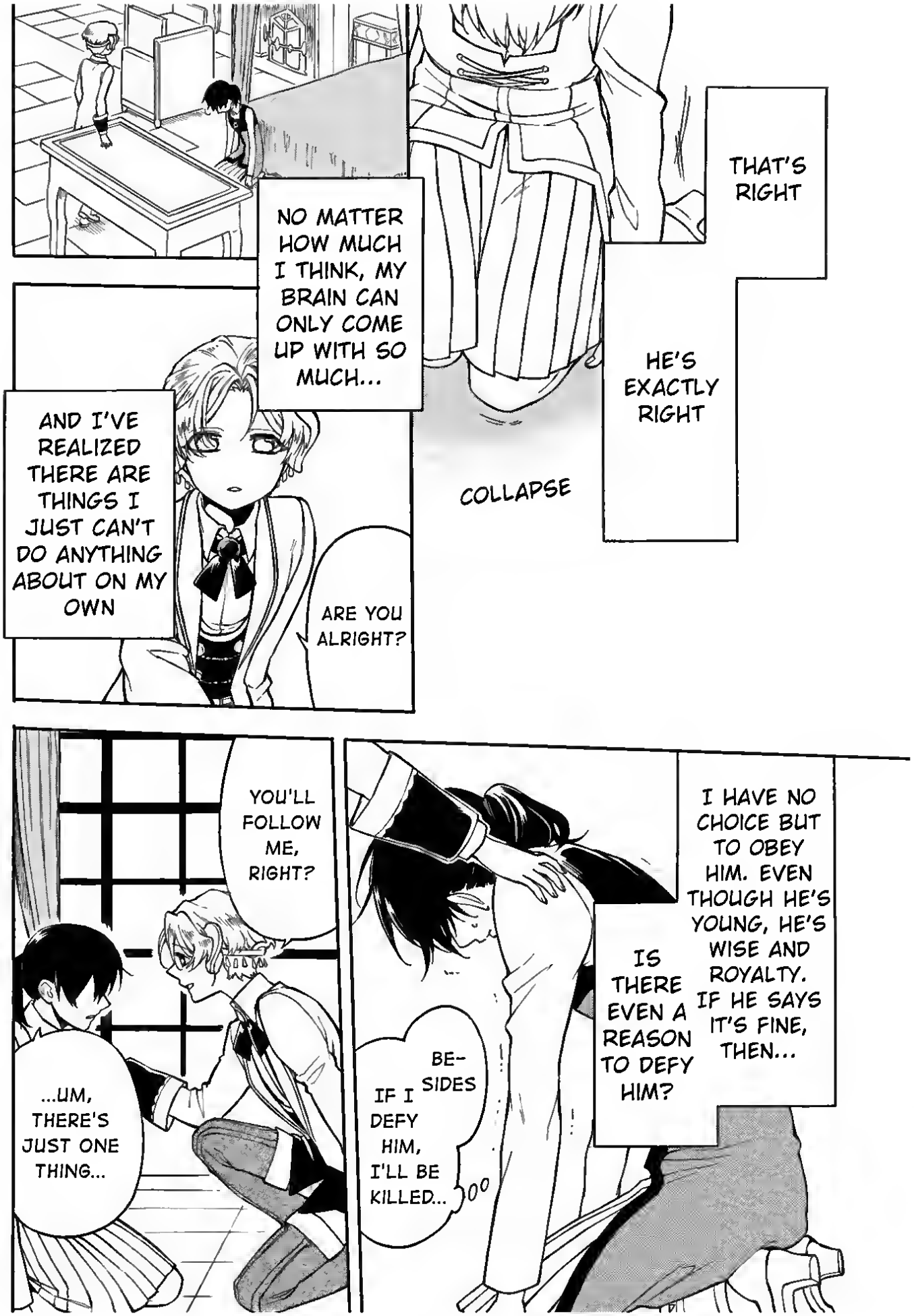
YOU HAVE ALL THE POWER WE NEED
THERE'S NO PROBLEM, IS THERE?
IN OTHER WORDS, AS LONG AS WE HAVE YOUR ABSURD IMAGINATION, WE'LL BE FINE
IF WE WERE TALKING ABOUT SOME SEASONED VETERAN, THEY'D BE ABLE TO IMAGINE MORE ACCURATE WEAPONS AND THE DIFFERENCE WOULD BE CLEAR
ALL THAT REMAINS IS FOR YOU TO LEARN WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR POWER, AND JUST FOLLOW OUR ORDERS...
IF THE DIFFERENCE IN YOUR ABILITIES IS THAT SMALL, THEN WE HAVE NO NEED FOR HARUKA
BUT THAT KIND OF THING SHOULD BE LEFT TO THE BLACKSMITHS
WHAT WE EXPECT FROM THE HOLY MAIDEN ARE THE "RIDICULOUS" WEAPONS THAT CAN TURN THE TIDES OF BATTLE
H-HE'S CARESS-ING MY CHIN!
BAT
WHA?! B-BUT...

TO THINK THAT THE "NATIONAL PROTECTIVE MEASURE" COULD BE SWAYED BY EMOTION LIKE THIS...
TH... THIS IS KIND OF...
CLACK
AS I THOUGHT, A HOLY MAIDEN WITH A WILL OF HER OWN WAS TROUBLE
RATHER, WITH HARUKA ADORING ROWSWALD AND NO LONGER BEING "OUR NATIONAL" HOLY MAIDEN
THAT'S WHY WE'RE GOING TO MAKE THIS GIRL THE HOLY MAIDEN
THE SAME WAY YOU DID TO HARUKA
HUH?
DID I TALK ABOUT BEAUTY OUT LOUD?
H-HOW... DO YOU KNOW...
HARUKA IS INDEED VERY CUTE AND POPULAR
BUMP
A FRIGHT-ENING WAY OF SPEAKING
HOWEVER, I DO UNDERSTAND THE "BEAUTY BRINGS BENEFITS" CONCEPT THAT YOU AND KUSHA SUPPORT

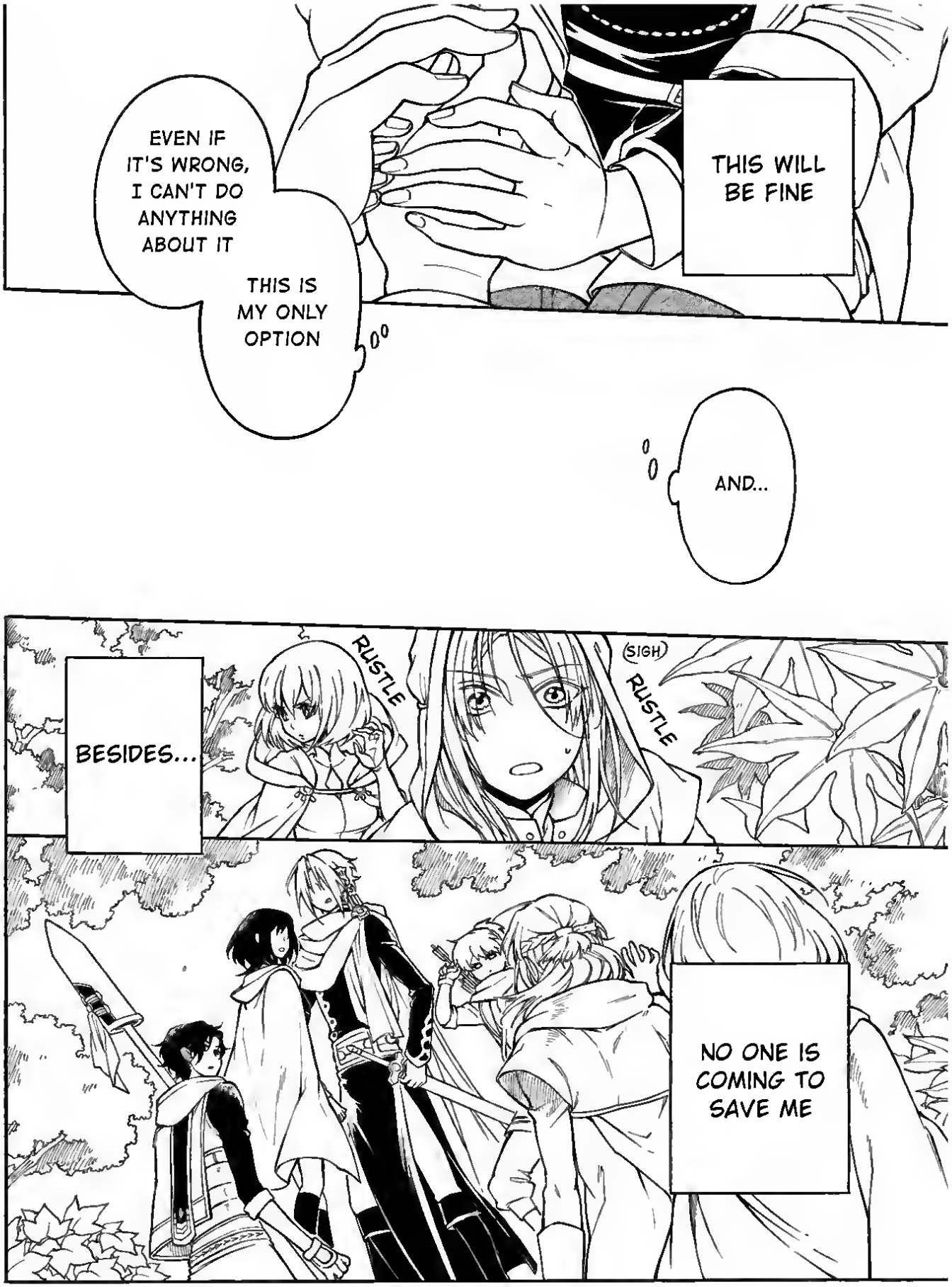
BUT WHAT IF A NEW AND MORE BEAUTIFUL GIRL APPEARS, ONE WHOSE APPEARANCE IS TRULY THAT OF A "CHILD OF GOD"?
AND WHAT IF THE ROYAL FAMILY, WHO HAS THE TRUST OF THE PEOPLE, CLAIMS "SHE IS THE REAL HOLY MAIDEN!"
NOT A FEW PEOPLE WILL BELIEVE US, DON'T YOU THINK?
THA...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY TO THAT...
IT'S TRUE
I KNOW, RIGHT?
TH-
CO-
LOOK, LOOK!
THE COLOR OF HER HAIR IS JUST LIKE
THE FIRST MAID-EN
SO THIS IS...

HE MAY LOOK LIKE A HARMLESS LITTLE BOY, BUT AGAINST SOMEONE LIKE THIS
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO?
SOMEONE BORN TO RULE
I'M SURE EVEN IF I ASKED HIM HOW HE KNOWS EVERY-THING, HE WOULDN'T TELL ME...
JOLT
ALSO, I DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT THE "TRUE HOLY MAIDEN" PART OF THE PLAN BECAUSE THERE WAS NO NEED
EVEN IF YOU'D KNOWN ABOUT IT, WOULD YOU HAVE DONE ANYTHING DIFFERENT?
UH... BUT...
AFTER ALL, YOUR ACTIONS WERE DECIDED FOR YOU
NO, I CAN'T LET IT STAY LIKE THAT...
BUT...
(HEH)
SATOKI...
BUT
.....
IT'S FINE NOW
YOU DON'T HAVE TO THINK ANYMORE

YOU'LL BE SAVING THE COUNTRY AND I'LL TAKE ALL THE RESPONSI-BILITY
IF YOU USE YOUR ABILITY ACCORDING TO MY ORDERS
THERE'S NO MORE NEED TO PANIC OR HESITATE
.....
...WHAT?
FROM NOW ON, I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO DO
THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WISHED FOR, RIGHT?
BA-BUM!
LIKE YOU SAID, "I CAN'T HANDLE THIS BY MYSELF"


NO MATTER HOW MUCH I THINK, MY BRAIN CAN ONLY COME UP WITH SO MUCH...
AND I'VE REALIZED THERE ARE THINGS I JUST CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT ON MY OWN
ARE YOU ALRIGHT?
COLLAPSE
THAT'S RIGHT
HE'S EXACTLY RIGHT
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO OBEY HIM. EVEN THOUGH HE'S YOUNG, HE'S WISE AND ROYALTY. IF HE SAYS IT'S FINE, THEN...
IS THERE EVEN A REASON TO DEFY HIM?
BE-SIDES IF I DEFY HIM, I'LL BE KILLED...
YOU'LL FOLLOW ME, RIGHT?
...UM, THERE'S JUST ONE THING...

HOW LONG HAVE YOU KNOWN ABOUT MY "POWER"?
AH...
EVER SINCE YOU FIRST USED THE POWER
BWAAAM
W-WOW... SO FAST...
ON TOP OF THAT, WE'VE KEPT WATCH OVER YOU EVER SINCE THE SUM-MONING
I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU, YOU KNOW
I'VE SEEN YOU DOING YOUR BEST
AND HOW FRANTIC YOU GOT
YOU ENDURED IT WELL
"SHADOW MAIDEN"
I'M REALLY GRATEFUL THAT *A PERSON LIKE YOU* CAME HERE
YEAH


THIS WILL BE FINE
EVEN IF IT'S WRONG, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT
THIS IS MY ONLY OPTION
AND...
BESIDES...
RUSTLE
(SIGH)
RUSTLE
NO ONE IS COMING TO SAVE ME

HI PEEPS. TL'ING IS TEDIOUS. I READ A LOT OF MANGA THO. I WATCH A LOT OF ANIMU. MY FAVORITE MEAL IS PASTA. I'M PRETTY CHILL, JUST HIT ME UP ON TWITTER @PLUMJUCIE

--PLUMJUICE

REHOSTING POLICY: I DON'T CARE ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT SO FEEL FREE TO RESIZE THIS OR PUT IT ANYWHERE. THE ORIGINAL IS ON BATOTO. JUST DON'T REMOVE THIS PAGE OR CLAIM IT AS YOUR OWN WORK. THANKS!

TRANSLATOR: PLUMJUICE

REDRAWER: BLACK-AGEHA